DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 349 801 FL 020 519

AUTHOR Minicucci, Catherine; Olsen, Laurie
TITLE Programs for Secondary Limited English Proficient Students: A California Study. FOCUS Number 5. Occasional Papers in Bilingual Education.
INSTITUTION National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 92
CONTRACT T289004001
NOTE 21p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Demography; Interviews; *Limited English Speaking; Program Effectiveness; *Program Implementation; Resource Materials; School Districts; Secondary Education; *Secondary School Students; Staff Development; State Departments of Education; State Surveys
IDENTIFIERS *California; Content Area Teaching

ABSTRACT

The results of an exploratory study that investigated the range of programs available to limited English proficient (LEP) students in California secondary schools are addressed. The study consisted of several components: a telephone survey to 27 secondary schools that were demographically and regionally representative of California high schools and intermediate schools with LEP populations; site visits to five schools selected for the richness of their programs; a literature review; and individual consultations and interviews with local school district and State Department of Education personnel. Innovative efforts to address the needs of LEP students throughout California were found, but all of these efforts faced difficulties in implementation. Regardless of the language of instruction, fewer than one-fourth of the schools surveyed were able to offer a full menu of core content courses to LEP students. Four recommendations resulting from the survey were made. These include: establishment of state-supported, locally based networks to disseminate information and allow educators to share ideas about what works under different conditions; comprehensive staff development; increase in state investment in resource materials for LEP students; and an initiative by the State Department of Education to bring practitioners together to advance effective programs and services for these students. (JL)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

FOCUS

Occasional
Papers
in
Bilingual
Education

Spring 1992
Number 5

# Programs for Secondary Limited English Proficient Students: A California Study

Catherine Minicucci
Laurie Olsen

ED349081

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Joel Gomez

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

FL020519

National Clearinghouse
for Bilingual Education

NCBE



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (NCBE) is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA) and is operated under Contract No. T289004001 by The George Washington University's Center for the Study of Education and National Development, jointly with the Center for Applied Linguistics. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Education, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. Readers are free to duplicate and use these materials in keeping with accepted publication standards. NCBE requests that proper credit be given in the event of reproduction.

**National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education**
**1118 22nd Street NW, Washington DC 20037**

*Director: Joel Gómez*
*Publications Coordinator: Lorraine Valdez Pierce*



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

# Programs for Secondary Limited English Proficient Students: A California Study

Catherine Minicucci

Laurie Olsen

## Introduction

In 1987, a gubernatorial veto allowed the law mandating bilingual education programs in California schools to expire. That law (AB 507, Chapter 1339, Statutes of 1980) required schools to offer bilingual education programs at Grades K–6 whenever there were ten or more limited English proficient (LEP) students in a given grade at the same school who shared the same native language. In Grades 7–12, school districts were required to provide English language development to limited English proficient students, but the exact nature of the program(s) to be offered was not specified. The status of current state law relating to these students in Grades 7–12 is somewhat ambiguous. Districts are required to assess and serve LEP students and to seek appropriately trained staff for them. State legal mandates rest on federal case law and the unrepealed intent section of the former state bilingual law.

In 1988, the state legislature requested a study of services available to limited English proficient students in California schools. One aspect of the study involved an exploratory, descriptive investigation into the range of programs available to these students in secondary schools. This publication addresses the results of that investigation.

*Limited English Proficient (LEP)* is the official term designated by California law to refer to students whose home or native language is not English and who require specialized instruction in order to participate meaningfully in school. Recently, the term *English learner* has been proposed in the state legislature to replace this term. In this publication, the term *limited English proficient* will be used wherever it is essential to ensure accuracy.

Historically, California state policy on bilingual education has focused on elementary school programs. This emphasis is understandable: there have traditionally been more limited English proficient students in elementary schools than in secondary schools. However, the number of these students in secondary schools is growing rapidly. In 1987, LEP students enrolled in Grades 7–12 totaled 181,442. In 1990, that number grew to 260,398, or almost one-third of the state's LEP population. Furthermore, the lack of information about available services at the secondary level suggests a need for directing policy attention toward secondary programs.

The exploratory study of secondary school programs for limited English proficient students was conducted throughout 1991 and consisted of several components: a telephone survey to twenty-seven secondary schools which were demographically and regionally representative of California high schools and intermediate schools with LEP populations; site visits to five schools selected for the richness of their programs; a literature review; and individual consultations and interviews with local school district and State Department of Education personnel. The school sites visited were chosen to reflect schools with extensive program offerings for LEP students. Information gleaned from the site visits served to broaden our perspective of the survey's findings and explore critical issues. A group of advisors was also convened to comment on the findings and provide additional data.

### Demographic Context

#### *Rapid growth*

California is in the midst of a profound demographic upheaval. Over the past decade, the state's total population grew 26 percent, faster than in any other state in the nation. The 1990 Census reported six million foreign-born persons residing in California—the result of a major immigration wave. Newcomers from every

continent and from dozens of cultural and language groups joined an already diverse population to form an unprecedented mixture of cultural, linguistic, national, and ethnic diversity. Almost two-thirds of new residents in California in 1990 were foreign-born immigrants. This demographic change is being felt profoundly in the state's secondary schools. Almost one quarter of a million LEP students are enrolled in California's secondary schools, representing a 42 percent increase in just the past three years.

Twenty-one of the twenty-seven schools surveyed reported "dramatic" and unanticipated growth in their secondary LEP population. The planning difficulties inherent in such unanticipated growth, and the difficulties of changing school programs to accommodate new student needs were major issues in discussions with school administrators and coordinators of LEP programs throughout the state.

***Diversity***

Aside from sheer numbers, the growing secondary population of limited English proficient students is both linguistically and culturally diverse. Statewide, ninety-six different language groups are represented in Grades 7–12. Sixty-eight percent of the LEP student population in those grades speak Spanish, 20 percent speak Asian languages, and 12 percent speak other languages. Almost half of the schools surveyed reported a changing composition of LEP students, including the emergence of new language and cultural groups, decreasing numbers of LEP students from a language or cultural group that schools had already adjusted to serving, and changes in students' socio-economic status and prior schooling levels. As one coordinator of LEP programs declared:

"We're learning to just accept that change—in our students and in our program—is going to be a regular feature of our lives here. We never know what to expect, never know what we'll get or what kinds of challenges it will present. It's like being in the middle of a tornado, you don't know where or when you'll touch down."

Based on a legislative history outlining the schools' responsibility to address language barriers for non-English speaking students, schools identify and serve students expressly in terms of their English language fluency and language group. Yet, the secondary LEP student population presents a complex array of academic and other needs which go far beyond language. It is the combination of these that presents such a challenge to the secondary schools.

By definition, LEP students are not fluent in English. However, within this population at every grade level in California's secondary schools, there is a wide range of English language fluency and prior academic preparation. This is an important factor because secondary school courses are based on assumptions about basic literacy skill levels and prior academic backgrounds.

With regard to prior academic background, secondary English learners tend to fall into one of three broad and often overlapping categories:

(1) recent immigrants who have received excellent previous schooling (in another country);

(2) those who have participated in language programs in elementary schools in the United States and continue into secondary schools with insufficient English fluency and academic content knowledge to be mainstreamed; and

(3) those who have little prior schooling and are lacking in both basic literacy skills and academic content knowledge.

Students in the first category have received excellent continuous schooling prior to immigrating to the United States and are well-prepared in many respects to learn in American schools. However, they face difficulties as a result of being educated in national education systems which differ from the local- and state-based systems in this country. The curriculum content and sequence, teaching pedagogy, and particular skills which are emphasized may differ radically from those valued in U.S. schools. Thus, even those who arrive as adolescents with strong academic backgrounds face what can be a difficult transition to our form of schooling as well as unexpected academic gaps, particularly in subjects such as social studies or history. However, these students (usually from middle class or professional families from industrialized urban centers) possess self-confidence in their abilities as students and strong academic and study skills to apply to new content.

Students in the second category represent a large number continuing into secondary schools from U.S. elementary schools. These students have varying levels of oral English fluency and academic content knowledge. While descriptions of these students are varied, most schools reported that the average continuing student has a fourth- to sixth-grade academic skill level when he/she enters high school; this is far below the academic level expected for the standard ninth-grade curriculum. Even when these students are orally fluent in English, they may be weak in reading and writing. During the course of their secondary school experience, most evidently complete the full sequence of English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and achieve oral English fluency but remain unable to be reclassified as fluent English proficient (FEP) or to compete in challenging academic areas. Many are placed in remedial classes. Continuing LEP students have been gloomily labeled "ESL lifers" by staff. Within this group are immigrant students who arrived in the United States with gaps in their schooling which they were unable to overcome and students who have been classified as LEP since elementary school. Teachers and counselors suggest that many of these students have failed to make progress due to transiency, resulting in large blocks of missed schooling in the earlier grades (Records were examined, for example, for LEP students who had been enrolled in five schools by sixth grade and who had missed twenty to thirty days of school each year). There is also some evidence to indicate that as students move from school to school or from grade to grade, they are enrolled in programs based on very different (and sometimes conflicting) pedagogical approaches.

An increasing and highly visible number of students with little or no prior schooling and little or no basic literacy in their native language form the third category of English learners in secondary schools. These students tend to be from rural, impoverished, or war-devastated regions of the world. Staff at twenty-five of the twenty-seven schools surveyed spoke of the complexity of designing programs for this category of student. Addressing the needs of these students requires approaches to developing basic literacy in an accelerated fashion and designing instructional programs for filling gaps in academic content. Faced with this challenge, some secondary schools are establishing special classes. However, finding the appropriate materials for these classes, identifying teachers with the necessary skills, and creating a pedagogy and accelerated program are deemed major problems.

The demand made on the schools by the wide range of academic preparation across the three categories of students described above is profound. Given the minimal numbers of students from any one category necessary for creating

classes and assigning teachers, this diversity directly affects the ability of schools to develop appropriate placements and programs for students.

**Pressures on Secondary Students**

Just as educators face more than a broad range of English proficiency levels, limited English proficient students face more than academic challenges. The legal and economic pressures of immigration, difficulties in adapting to a new culture, and needs for physical and mental health all affect a student's participation in school.

School attendance problems are common among students because of the legal and financial concerns many immigrant and language minority families must cope with. It is estimated that as many as 50 percent of the immigrants in California are undocumented persons. For students, this can lead to fears of divulging family information which might lead to INS detention or deportation and places tremendous legal pressures on the family. These pressures often result in transiency and changing schools. Furthermore, most immigrant teenagers, regardless of legal status, also feel tremendous pressure to work in order to support themselves or contribute to their family income. Many must also stay at home to take care of younger siblings so that parents or other adults in the family can work.

Trying to adjust to a new culture and language can be very difficult for teenagers. For recent immigrants, this is compounded by trying to cope with a new school culture and daily procedures. From changing classes at the sound of a bell to storing books in lockers to buying lunch in the school cafeteria, language minority teens face novelty at every turn. Moving from class to class in large schools, few students are able to develop close relationships with their teachers. Speaking out in class, participating in discussions, and maintaining relatively informal relationships with teachers are all quite new phenomena to students who have been educated in other countries. Trying to bridge two cultures, particularly for newly-arrived teenagers, can be painful and difficult. Juggling culturally different expectations about what it means to be a mature and responsible person and handling culturally different sex role expectations is difficult. Rightfully, students often feel caught between two worlds.

Immigrant adolescents coming from relatively homogeneous cultures have to learn to live in our heterogeneous and racially stratified society. In many communities, the new immigrant is at the bottom rung of the social ladder. Many perceive the new world they are entering as hostile and unwelcoming. This view is supported by a recent California Attorney General's report (California Department of Justice, 1990), which documented an increase in anti-immigrant hostilities and racially motivated hate crimes in schools and among young people.

In this context, providing the support to ensure that students attend school consistently is requisite to offering instruction in the schools. A coordinator of LEP students in one high school said:

"Despite the difficulties sometimes in delivering instruction, that's not our big gap. The gap is in being able to provide for the needs of the kids and their families so they can be in school. Everything from glasses, clothes, jackets, primary health care. Within the past ten days alone I've had to call 911 five times. They come with big health problems, and no means of getting health care. The kids don't speak English and the parents don't either. So we have to put a lot of money into translation to communicate with the kids and the parents, to help them get the services and support they need. It's overwhelming. We need home-school liaisons for each of our language groups. It's a

glaring need. And it has to be dealt with before you can even begin to talk about instruction."

In the face of this complexity of needs, many secondary schools in California are actively involved in trying new approaches, in scrambling to find new solutions. Many others are aware of the need for "something different" but feel frustrated about what they could or should be doing, particularly in light of their limited resources and lack of models. All, however, face a massive challenge in changing the structure and curriculum of secondary schools to make them more responsive to and appropriate for the rapidly increasing population of students learning English as a non-native language.

## Programs and Policies

This discussion of secondary school programs and policies is divided into five parts: assessment and placement procedures; content program models; ESL programs; content area coverage; and school policy factors.

### Assessment and Placement Procedures

Given the tremendous range of academic needs (English language literacy, native language literacy and academic skills), appropriate assessment of language minority students is critical for accurate program planning and placement. In California, the assessment of these students when they enter the secondary level follows state-required procedures. A home language survey is given to the student and the parent(s) to determine the language used at home. If a student comes from a home in which another language is spoken, he/she is tested on a state-approved instrument to assess oral English fluency. In California, these instruments include the Language Assessment Scales (LAS), the IDEA Oral Proficiency Test (IPT), and the Bilingual Syntax Measure (BSM).

In addition to oral English fluency, schools assess students' English academic skills. Commonly used instruments include the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) or other English language standardized achievement tests. Some districts augment this assessment by testing academic skills in the native language, reviewing transcripts at the high school level, and/or interviewing the student and parent(s) in the native language to determine previous schooling experience.

In the schools surveyed, the areas consistently assessed include oral English fluency and English reading, language, and mathematics achievement. English writing is assessed in half of the intermediate schools (both middle and junior high schools) and two-thirds of the high schools surveyed. A few schools also assess academic skills in the native language, attempt to determine previous schooling, or supplement standardized English reading tests with individually administered instruments.

Assessment at the high school level appears to be more extensive than at the intermediate level. One-third of the high schools surveyed use English language placement tests in addition to screening for oral English fluency. Most of the high schools rely on the CTBS to assess English reading. While high schools make more of an effort than intermediate schools to determine students' previous schooling and academic achievement in the native language, only half of the high schools surveyed actually conduct assessment in the native language.

Current assessment practices of students in the secondary schools surveyed focus on meeting state legal requirements for assessing oral English fluency at the time of school entry and measuring academic

achievement on English language standardized tests for possible reclassification. However, native language assessment to determine academic skills is conducted on a much more limited basis. When such assessments are conducted, content area classroom teachers do not receive the results for individual students, and previous schooling experience is generally not taken into consideration.

### Content Program Models

All of the schools surveyed in the study offer two types of classes to students acquiring English: ESL and selected electives in the mainstream such as physical education or music. Beyond these two common elements, schools vary widely in their approach to teaching content. Some schools use the native language of students to teach content classes while others use Sheltered English. Some place students in mainstream classes while others delay academic content instruction until English fluency is achieved.

Sheltered English is an approach in which content instruction is offered in English to classes composed solely of English learners. The term "sheltered English" was coined by Krashen (Edwards et al., 1984) to mean subject-matter instruction made comprehensible to these students. In the Sheltered English classroom, the focus is on subject matter and the students' attention is focused on the message (content) rather than the medium (language). Krashen stressed the fact that native English-speaking students are excluded from the Sheltered English classroom so that instruction can be directed at the English learners' level of comprehension. Sheltered English classes may use any of the following instructional strategies: (1) visual cues and manipulatives to help students understand what is being communicated; (2) language modifications (pauses, repetition, elaboration); (3) interactive lectures in which there is a continuous teacher-student dialogue; and (4) focus on key concepts rather than on details.

Programs for secondary English learners in California appear to divide into four basic models:

**Model A—Sheltered English Only** programs use Sheltered English exclusively to deliver academic content instruction.

**Model B—Native Language** programs use the students' native language(s) to deliver academic content instruction. In this study, this model was observed exclusively for Spanish-speaking students.

**Model C—Native Language combined with Sheltered English** programs use native language instruction for some academic content classes and Sheltered English instruction for others. Native language instruction may be used with Spanish speakers (because there are larger numbers of this group) while Sheltered English is used with mixed language groups. Or, native language instruction may be used with students having less-developed native language skills and Sheltered English instruction reserved for students with more advanced native language literacy.

**Model D—Mainstream Placement** programs place students in mainstream content classes rather than creating special classes exclusively for them. Students may or may not be clustered by language group in these classes. In some cases, native language aides may be used. Students are placed in mainstream content classes after they reach an intermediate level of fluency in oral English.

Within these program models, schools differ in the *extent* of content coverage provided to students learning English. Content coverage ranges from *full content coverage* to *partial* and *sparse content coverage*.

**Full content coverage** means all subject areas at all grade levels are taught in classes designed to address the needs of students. Students in full content programs are enrolled in a complete menu of classes including ESL, math, science, social studies and electives.

In schools offering **partial content coverage**, a few classes in content areas are designed to meet the needs of students. Frequently, this is because there are insufficient openings to accommodate all students learning English in core content classes. Students in partial content programs receive a short schedule of classes; typically, it will include ESL and one or more content classes. The remainder of the school day is spent in study halls or in elective courses. Students may, for example, be scheduled for either a mathematics or a science class but not both.

**Sparse content coverage** refers to *large gaps* in content area coverage. A specific content area such as science or math may not be scheduled and/or may not be offered at particular grade levels. Students in sparse content programs are enrolled in ESL and elective courses. They do not take science or math and may, for example, be limited to courses offered in Grades 9 and 10 only.

**Table 1** shows the number of schools in the survey by program model and content area coverage. Regardless of the approach taken to content instruction, fewer than one-fourth of the schools surveyed offer full programs for students learning English. More than half of the high schools and one-third of the intermediate schools have major gaps in their offerings or offer no content classes at all. Thirteen of the twenty-seven schools surveyed either offer few or no content area classes for students. This means that many English learners in California may not be enrolled in content area subjects. As a result, they will have limited access to further education and career opportunities.

**Table 1**
**Models of Secondary Programs—Survey results**

**Approach to teaching content**

| | | Intermediate schools | High schools | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Model A: Sheltered English** | Full coverage | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Partial coverage | 5 | 2 | 7 |
| | Sparse coverage | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| **Model B: Primary Language** | Full coverage | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| | Partial coverage | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Sparse coverage | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| **Model C: Sheltered English and Primary Language** | Full coverage | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| | Partial coverage | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | Sparse coverage | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| **Model D: Mainstream** | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| **Total** | | 14 | 13 | 27 |

Program models and the extent of coverage found in the limited survey were analyzed to determine if any consistent relationships to demographic factors existed. No systematic relationship was found between the choice of model and the extent of content area coverage and relevant factors such as: the total number of limited English proficient students enrolled in a school; the percent of total school enrollment accounted for by these students; the numbers of speakers of any one language; or the level of school (intermediate or high school). However, it should be noted that the

number of schools surveyed is too small to consider these findings conclusive.

### ESL Programs

All of the schools surveyed have ESL programs and all but one offer more than one level of ESL instruction. Goals of ESL classes at the secondary level include development of oral English and reading skills. In addition, some intermediate level and nearly all high school level ESL classes focus on building writing skills. In all the schools surveyed, assessment results are used to place students in ESL classes. In ten of the twenty-seven schools, initial ESL placement is based solely on oral English fluency; twelve schools consider the student's English reading level in addition to hihe/sher oral English fluency. Two intermediate schools consider literacy in the native language as a placement criterion and place students with advanced native language literacy skills in more advanced ESL classes.

Once a student is placed in ESL, movement from level to level depends primarily on teacher judgment. Only three of the high schools surveyed use an English language proficiency test to determine movement from one ESL level to another. One high school has developed its own ESL placement test for this purpose.

Although there is variation in the number of levels of ESL classes offered, almost half of the schools surveyed offer at least three. Eleven schools offer more than three levels, usually including an introductory or newcomer level of ESL as well as a transitional class taught in the English department at the end of the ESL sequence. Advanced ESL classes stress literature and writing skills. Transitional English classes are a relatively recent offering in many schools and have been developed in response to the large numbers of students who have completed the ESL sequence and are failing in mainstream English classes. Transitional English classes provide additional support to these students by developing their ability to perform tasks required in mainstream classes. Transitional English classes also focus on literature and writing skills, but they are the first classes in the mainstream offered to students who have completed the ESL program sequence. In general, schools with larger numbers of these students have developed more course offerings in ESL.

Placement policies in ESL programs have important consequences on class composition. For example, when either oral or reading ability is used as a criterion for placement, students who are orally fluent but lack reading comprehension skills may be placed in the same class as new arrivals who are not yet fluent in oral English. Thus, students fluent in oral language may have to sit through oral English development activities that they do not need instead of receiving the reading and writing instruction that they do need. When oral English is the sole placement criterion, classes tend to contain wide variations among students by age, previous schooling, and native language literacy.

Secondary students learning English are quite diverse in their needs for English language development. Some need oral as well as reading and writing skills while others need only literacy skills. Some students are already literate in their native language; some are not. Despite the availability of multiple levels of ESL classes, the range of student needs does not appear to be met by ESL program offerings in most of the schools surveyed.

### Content Area Coverage

Aside from the extent of overall content area coverage discussed above, this survey sampling of programs available to secondary limited English proficient students in California explored how content

area instruction offered to these students fits into larger structures. Factors examined included placement criteria, tracking (general versus college preparatory), grade level coverage, and content approach (native language, Sheltered English, or mainstream).

***Placement criteria***

Placement in content classes is usually based on a student's English proficiency level. Generally, students at the beginning and intermediate levels are placed into content classes designed for them, pending availability; advanced ESL students generally enter mainstream academic or remedial classes. In more than half of the secondary schools surveyed, a student's English proficiency level is the sole criterion considered in placing him/her in content courses. In the remaining schools, other variables were taken into account: two schools consider native language literacy; two consider math level for placement in math; two take into account age and grade; and four use a combination of these variables.

***Tracking***

At the intermediate school level, most math, science, and social studies classes are in the general academic track. Eight of the eleven intermediate schools offering math, seven of the ten offering science, and eleven of the thirteen offering social studies provide only general track classes to English learners. Two of the intermediate schools in the survey provide self-contained bilingual, non-tracked content instruction. Only one school offers college preparatory courses in math and science at the intermediate level. At the high school level, about one-third of the schools offer at least some college preparatory classes in math, science, and social studies.

***Grade level coverage***

In eight of the fourteen intermediate schools surveyed, social studies is offered at all grade levels. Science is offered at all grade levels in only six of the schools while mathematics is offered across all grade levels in five schools.

In most high schools surveyed, content courses are offered to students in Grades 9 and 10 but not in Grades 11 and 12. Generally, science and social studies are offered at more grade levels than is math. However, some students do enroll in advanced mainstream math classes.

The reasons that content courses in Grades 11 and 12 are not offered to students vary. One school has a policy not to enroll new students beyond the age of sixteen who are limited English proficient in high school and, instead, refers them to adult education programs. Another high school places all incoming students determined to be limited English proficient in ninth grade regardless of age or previous schooling. In this school, access to content classes is provided in the tenth grade when the student achieves minimal oral English fluency. Several high schools reported that the dropout rate was sufficiently high among these students as to make eleventh and twelfth grade content classes unnecessary.

***Content teaching approaches***

The schools surveyed in this study use a variety of approaches to teach academic content to English learners. Sheltered English is the preferred approach used by both intermediate and high schools. While native language instruction is used in about one-third of the intermediate schools' science, math, and social studies courses, such instruction is limited to Spanish.

At the high school level, there is less use of native language instruction in content classes than at the intermediate level.

Sheltered English alone, or in combination with native language content courses, is used to teach content classes. At one high school, native language content instruction is offered to Spanish speakers while Sheltered English is offered to mixed language groups. At another high school, native language instruction is offered to Spanish-speaking students with weak native language skills while more advanced Spanish-speaking students are taught in Sheltered English classrooms.

There appears to be a striking difference in curriculum between middle school content courses using students' native language and junior and senior high courses using Sheltered English. Middle schools offer more self-contained classes and rely less on departmental structure than junior high schools. For example, middle schools may offer a combined "core" class for language arts and social studies. Bilingual middle schools are able to use textbooks available in both English and Spanish that adhere to California curricular frameworks. In this way, these schools offer a math, science, and language arts curriculum for students which is comparable to that offered in the mainstream. At the high school level, native language content classes are hampered by a lack of materials. For example, the high school bilingual science programs included in the study use science books in Spanish designed for use in middle school classrooms because Spanish language science textbooks are not available for high school students. None of the bilingual science classes in our survey schools qualify to receive credit for college entrance because they are in the general track and do not include laboratory components.

Secondary school programs which offer content area instruction through a Sheltered English approach are experiencing serious gaps in materials and ambiguity in their curriculum content. Sheltered English courses rely solely on teacher-made materials or use English texts but move more slowly through the material, using paraprofessionals to assist in translation.

#### *Curriculum coverage*

At the intermediate level, many schools offer neither Sheltered English nor content area classes in the students' native language. For example, four of the fourteen schools surveyed do not offer science to English learners, three do not offer math, and one does not offer social studies. At the high school level, three of the thirteen schools surveyed do not offer math, two do not offer science, and two do not offer social studies through Sheltered English or native language approaches. The pattern of content area offering through instructional approaches which make the material meaningful to students learning English varies greatly from school to school. Thus, a student's access to meaningful content area instruction appears to be determined largely by the school he/she attends.

Fewer than half of the schools surveyed offer one or more foreign language classes designed specifically for native speakers. Seven of thirteen high schools and five of fourteen intermediate schools offer Spanish for Spanish speakers. In rare cases, Asian languages are also offered.

### School Policy

School policy factors that appear to influence the nature and extent of programming for English learners at the secondary level are: district leadership, site leadership, staff availability, teacher willingness to teach students, and school structure.

#### *District leadership*

District leadership is expressed in master plans for second language programs, in assessment policies and practices, in

staff development activities which prepare teachers to work with English learners, in incentives for teachers to participate in these activities, and in support of ESL department Chairs and on-site resource personnel. In addition, district directors of programs serving LEP students can encourage secondary school administrators to add course offerings for these students and promote participation of teachers in staff development activities which focus on effective teaching strategies for them. Most directors at the district level, however, reported frustration with the slow pace of progress in the development and implementation of programs for English learners in their schools.

In each of three districts, pairs of schools at the same level (intermediate or high school) were surveyed in order to gain insights into the impact of district-level leadership. The districts exhibited a range from strong to limited leadership within programs serving students acquiring English as a second language.

Of those districts exhibiting strong leadership, two intermediate schools in one unified district offer full content coverage in math, science, and social studies. Strong leadership is illustrated in another unified school district. Two high schools operating within the same district context and having many of the same program elements independently make critical decisions about the extent of programming. While both high schools offer Sheltered English, three levels of ESL, and bilingual support laboratories for students who need additional assistance, they vary in the extent of content coverage offered to students.

Limited leadership was evident in one large high school district. In this district, there did not appear to be a district-wide "program model"; instead, each school developed its own approach to serving students. One high school, for example, offers no content classes designed specifically for students learning English. Incoming students are placed into ESL, physical education, and electives during the first year and are held out of academic courses until their second year at the school. Another high school offers Sheltered English courses: two in science and two in social studies, but none in math. All content classes offered are in the general academic track.

***Site leadership***

There appears to be more content coverage available to students in schools in which a site administrator takes an active leadership role than in sites in which the ESL Chair or a counselor takes responsibility for programs. In the six schools with full content coverage, the principal, or a coordinator for LEP programs with the support of the principal, exercises significant leadership over these programs.

The scarce literature on effective secondary school programs for English learners suggests the importance of a school-wide emphasis and shared responsibility for students. Effective site leadership is critical if a school is to envision an overall program for these students by assessing their academic needs and developing a whole-school response.

***Staff availability***

The availability of teachers prepared to offer either native language instruction or Sheltered English content instruction is a major factor in determining what courses will be offered in a secondary school. Survey respondents reported that they were reluctant to assign English learners to unwilling and/or unprepared teachers, fearing that it would be a negative experience for the students. For example if, in a science department of six teachers, two teachers are trained to teach English learners, science offerings tend to be limited to the space available in their class-

rooms. However, increases in the enrollment of these students sometimes result in unwilling or unqualified teachers being assigned to ESL classes. In several schools, staffing assignment shifts became necessary due to changes in the student population and fiscal constraints on new hiring. As English learners comprise a greater proportion of the secondary school population, more teachers must be prepared and assigned to teach them.

***Teacher willingness***

The willingness of secondary school teachers to participate in staff development programs is an important factor in a school's ability to offer special programs to English learners. Most districts surveyed have a state-approved plan to remedy the shortage of staff trained to serve these students. Districts offer a range of incentives including paid staff development opportunities and special bonuses to teachers who participate in them. However, if teachers do not choose to respond to those incentives, there is no mechanism to compel them to do so. As a result, it is common for new, monolingual English teachers to be assigned to classes of English learners as a condition of employment. Teachers fluent in Spanish but having no other special qualifications may also be required to teach these classes. Teachers drafted into teaching students may or may not be willing to participate in staff development that will help them serve this population. Some of these teachers choose not to participate because of fears that they will be "trapped" into teaching these students on an ongoing basis. Others are intrigued by the challenge and want to participate. Because of the limited nature of the exploratory study, it is not possible to tell what proportion of experienced secondary school teachers are willing to participate in staff development programs related to students learning English as a non-native language.

***School structure***

The departmentalization of most secondary school faculty by content areas has major repercussions for programs offered to students. In the typical, departmentalized high school, no single person is in charge of a comprehensive approach to student programming. The ESL department may be in charge of English language instruction, but it is up to each content area department chairperson to respond to the academic course needs of students. Responsibility for making content courses available to students, assigning teachers, and grouping and clustering students in content area classes most often falls to each content area Chair. Some chairpersons are assertive in developing a program for students; others are resistant. For example, in one school, a fairly full menu of science offerings was available to students, although math was not. In another school, only one basic science class was available to students. In yet another school, a Spanish bilingual world history course was available because there was a staff member willing to teach it, but other language groups were placed in Sheltered English courses. The priorities and philosophies about whether and how to serve English learners could and often did vary markedly across departments within the same school. The result is limited and uneven access to content courses.

In some secondary schools, tension between the ESL/bilingual department and the content area departments was evident. Some content area faculty felt that the ESL teachers were trying to "coddle" students and hold them back, while some ESL faculty felt that the content area faculty were refusing to deal with the academic needs of the students. This tension was exacerbated in those schools where the principal did not articulate an overall philosophy or vision for programs serving students.

The master course schedule of each high school poses significant constraints for mounting programs for students learning English. The schedule sets forth the classes to be taught, the faculty to teach the classes, the number of students in each class, and the number of sections in each subject. The schedule must accommodate college entrance requirements for students in college preparatory programs. The schedule is set in the spring or summer preceding the school year and allows little room for modification once the school year commences.

The constraints of the master schedule may also limit the extent to which a teacher prepared to teach Sheltered English is assigned such classes. Classes needed for students learning English may not be offered because the qualified teacher is required to teach other classes. Not assigning teachers qualified to teach in Sheltered English classes to those classes limits their opportunities to gain classroom experience with English learners. This is one factor contributing to the practice of assigning unqualified new teachers to these students.

While high schools appear to be struggling to serve English learners, intermediate schools seem to enjoy greater latitude in designing programs for these students. Several middle schools in the survey offer a three-period language and content area class with a bilingual teacher, thereby offering full content and literacy development in the native language. English learners mix with English-speaking peers for electives.

The structural rigidity of departmentalized secondary schools is particularly unsuited to the educational needs of students acquiring English as a second language. These students enter school at different ages with varying levels of English language ability, previous schooling, and native language literacy. To address the wide range of abilities students represent, secondary schools need to have the flexibility to change schedules and programs in order to meet students' needs.

**Summary**

The secondary schools included in this California survey implement four program models for limited English proficient students. All of these models offer ESL and English language elective courses. Schools vary in their approach to teaching content (whether Sheltered English or the native language is used) and the extent of content coverage. The pattern of course offerings appears to relate to the nature of both district and site leadership, staff availability and willingness to take training, and the decentralized nature of decision making in the departmentalized secondary school.

The departmental system can be an unyielding structure in which the schedule is set in advance and the school cannot readily respond to sudden influxes of LEP students. The large numbers of these students entering high school is a relatively recent phenomenon in California, and the needs of these students are outside the scope of many high school teachers educated in the 1960s and 1970s. The high schools in our survey seem to be struggling with the challenge posed by serving large numbers of limited English proficient students of varying educational backgrounds through secondary schools that lack the flexibility to meet these students' needs.

In the secondary schools surveyed, the supply of content classes for LEP students is exceeded by the number of students who need the classes. As a result, some students take only science while others take only math or social studies. This limits their ability to graduate from high school, enter college, or prepare themselves to become productive members of the work force.

## Conclusion and Summary

Although this exploratory examination of programs and services for limited English proficient students at the secondary level was conducted in a single state, the findings from the telephone survey of twenty-seven secondary schools and visits to five additional schools suggest several critical issues for the design and implementation of programs for these students at both the state and national levels. In light of the serious concerns about limited access to content area courses and the major challenges confronting secondary schools in California, concerted state leadership and support are needed.

A major immigration wave during the past decade has created a rapidly increasing population of English learners in secondary schools in California. Each year, these students represent a proportionately larger part of the secondary student population, and this trend is expected to continue. It appears that secondary schools are aware, at least to some extent, of the complex challenges presented by this population and are actively designing new courses, developing pedagogy, and implementing support services to address them. Yet, the findings also suggest major gaps in meeting the academic and related needs of these students, and that schools need improved access to research, models, and resources in order to develop effective strategies and programs to educate them.

Innovative efforts to address the complex needs of English learners were found throughout the state but, in all cases, these efforts faced severe problems in implementation. Regardless of the language of instruction, fewer than one-fourth of the schools surveyed were able to offer a full menu of core content courses to these students. Several factors contribute to this lack of access:

- the diverse and complex needs of the rapidly growing student population;
- assessment practices which provide too little information to gauge academic needs;
- a critical shortage of qualified teachers who are willing and/or able to teach students;
- increasing separation of students learning English from mainstream grademates through the proliferation of Sheltered English approaches without clear agreement on what these approaches entail, with little monitoring or evaluation, with ostensibly inadequate training and support for teachers, and with inadequate curricular materials;
- an absence of theoretical models to serve as the underpinning for effective, comprehensive secondary school programs for students learning English as a non-native language;
- difficulties in obtaining appropriate textbooks and materials; and
- rigidity in the departmentalized structure and schedule of secondary schools that results in a lack of comprehensive program planning for students.

In those schools most effectively responding to these challenges, the following processes were apparent:

- attempts to build a shared school-wide vision which includes English learners;
- a culturally supportive school climate;
- ongoing training and staff support involving all teachers in the preparation for and planning of programs for students learning English; and
- coordination and articulation between the ESL/Bilingual Education department and other departments, and between different grade levels.

### Recommendations

Policy recommendations resulting from this survey focus on the state role in helping secondary schools meet the needs of their limited English proficient students. Four major recommendations flow from the findings:

- The establishment of state-supported, locally-based networks to disseminate information and allow educators to share what they know about what works for these students under different demographic conditions.

- Comprehensive staff development aimed at providing all teachers in secondary schools throughout the state with training in second language acquisition.

- An increase in the state's investment in classroom resource materials for language minority students.

- An initiative by the State Department of Education to bring practitioners and researchers together to advance the state-of-the-art of providing effective programs and services for students at the secondary level. A strongly supported knowledge development effort is central to the ability of schools to meet the needs of students learning English in secondary schools.

This exploratory study has raised many questions. Given the serious implications of the findings, additional research should be undertaken, both in California and in other states, to determine how widespread these trends and patterns of limited access may be. Outside of California, states can use the findings from this study to stimulate discussion and to review their own programs, including access to content area instruction. Only when the extent and nature of the challenges are known, and programmatic effectiveness under various conditions understood, can the rights of all students to receive a meaningful secondary education be ensured.

## References

California Department of Education. (1987–1990). *Annual language census.* Sacramento, CA: Author.

California Department of Justice. (1990, April). Commission on Racial, Ethnic, Religious and Minority Violence. *Final report.* Sacramento, CA: Author.

Edwards, H., Wesche, M., Krashen, S., Clement, R., & Kruidenier, B. (1984). Second language acquisition through subject-matter learning: A study of sheltered psychology classes at the University of Ottawa. *Canadian Modern Language Review, 41,* 268–282.

ED/OBEMLA/92-2

## About the Authors

**Catherine Minicucci** is an educational consultant based in Sacramento, California. She served on the study team led by Berman Weiler Associates of Berkeley for a recently completed study of programs for LEP students in California. Currently she is working on a study of school reform for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.

**Laurie Olsen** is Executive Director of California Tomorrow and served as co-director for the study on which this publication is based. She is the chairperson for the National Coalition of Advocates for Students and has authored several studies on immigrant students for California Tomorrow, including *Crossing the Schoolhouse Border* (1988) and *Bridges* (1989).